

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 041030Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7889

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 JIDDA 2531

EXDIS

FOR ASST SECRETARY ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR PORTER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PLO, SA
SUBJECT: FAHD AND ARAFAT

REF: (A) JIDDA 1758, (B) STATE 068375

1. I APPRECIATE YOUR MESSAGE AND AM PLEASED TO HAVE YOUR INTERESTING REACTIONS AND QUESTIONS.

2. IN PROVIDING THE FURTHER THOUGHTS REQUESTED, I SHOULD STATE MY AGREEMENT WITH THE FIRST THREE PARAGRAPHS OF REFTEL B, ESPECIALLY WITH THE THIRD. FAHD'S GREATEST WORRY IN THE MATTER OF THE M.E. PROBLEM IS THAT THERE WILL BE NO SETTLEMENT AT ALL, FIRST BECUASE OF THE EFFECT THAT MIGHT HAVE ON THE FUTURE OF U.S.-SAUDI COOPERATION; SECOND IS HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH OPPORTUNITY THE SOVIETS MIGHT PERCEIVE IN FAILURE TO ACHIEVE PEACE; AND A THIRD IS HIS FEAR THAT SERIOUS PREPARATIONS FOR ANOTHER M.E. WAR WOULD BEGIN. (I WOULD NOT OVER-EMPHASIZE THE SECOND FACTOR: THE SAUDIS AND OTHER LIKE-MINDED ARABS HAVE LIVED FOR THIRTY YEARS WITH THE M.E. PROBLEM. THEY BELIEVE WITH REASON THAT SETTLEMENT OR NO SETTLEMENT, THE UNITED STATES MUST CONTINUE TO COUNTERACT SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THIS REGION.)

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3.A. YOU DREW WITH CLARITY THE OUTLINE OF ONE ASPECT OF COMMENCING NEGOTIATIONS AND OF MOVING TOWARD A SETTLEMENT: THAT IS THE MATTER OF INDUCING THE ARAB SIDE TO CEASE INSISTING THAT THE PLO PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA. ARAB INSISTENCE BEARS ON THE FACT, BUT NOT THE FORM, OF SUCH PARTICIPATION AS I UNDERSTAND THEM. WE OF COURSE KNOW THAT THERE ARE MANY PRECEDENTS AND FORMS FOR NEGOTIATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS PRIOR TO MUTUAL RECOGNITION REGARDLESS OF PREVIOUS

POSITIONS AND STATEMENTS. AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M GETTING AT, I WOULD GUESS THAT THE PLO LEADERSHIP WOULD NOT BE OVERLY HESITANT ABOUT CHANGING THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD 242 OR ALTERING THE COVENANT WHEN THE REWARDS FOR SO DOING ARE CLEAR: THEY KNOW THAT THE SIMPLE ACT OF PALESTINIAN RECOGNITION WOULD MAKE MOST OR ALL OF THE OBNOXIOUS LANGUAGE OF THE COVENANT NULL AND VOID. BUT THE ISRAELIS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT NO SUCH RECOGNITION WOULD BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE GOI ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PLO.

3.B. AS FOR THE CONFERENCE, THE PLO WOULD NOT DARE FORMALLY ABDICATE THEIR RIGHT TO BE PRESENT BECAUSE, AS FAHD PUTS IT, "THEY WOULD NOT LAST A DAY IF THEY DID".

4.A. LET US NOW TURN TO PRINCE FAHD'S POTENTIAL IN THE LIGHT OF QUESTIONS POSED IN YOUR MESSAGE:

4.B. "WOULD PRINCE FAHD BE PREPARED TO USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH ARAFAT IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A WAY FOR PALESTINIAN INTERESTS TO BE REPRESENTED AT LEAST INITIALLY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BY SOMETHING OTHER THAN AN INVITATION TO THE PLO?" HE WOULD TRY TO HELP IF THE PRESIDENT REQUESTED IT, BUT HE WOULD WANT TO KNOW (A) YOUR DEFINITION OF "INITIALLY" AND (B) WHAT MEANS YOU WOULD SUGGEST FOR PROTECTING THE PLO POLITICALLY IN SUCH AN EVENT. SEE PARAGRAPHS 3-A AND 3-B ABOVE.

4.C. YOU SUGGEST THAT SAUDI ASSURANCES THAT PALESTINIAN INTERESTS WOULD BE PROTECTED IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES "MIGHT BE OF SOME IMPORTANCE TO ARAFAT". THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, BUT HERE AGAIN A CLARIFICATION OF "INTERESTS" AND OF THE BASIS ON WHICH THE SAUDIS
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WOULD OFFER PROTECTION WOULD APPEAR NECESSARY. COULD YOU FLESH OUT THAT CONCEPT A LITTLE MORE, PLEASE?

4.D. PERHAPS THE SAME INQUIRY WAS CONTAINED IN YOUR ADDITIONAL QUESTION AS TO WHETHER FAHD "WOULD BE PREPARED TO USE HIS INFLUENCE" TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN THE PLO POSITIONS THAT WOULD "GIVE US SOMETHING TO WORK WITH". I SUSPECT FAHD BELIEVES HE HAS DONE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITH THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE PLO PENDING NEW DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, IF YOU COULD TELL HIM THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD JOIN WITH SAUDI ARABIA TO ENSURE THAT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE DOES NOT OVERLOOK THE MATTER OF A "HOMELAND" FOR THE PALESTINIANS YOU MIGHT HIT PAY DIRT, OR AT LEAST START AN EXCHANGE THAT MIGHT LEAD SOMEWHERE. INCIDENTALLY, THAT WORD "HOMELAND" IS A VERY, VERY USEFUL WORD.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JIDDA 2531

EXDIS

5.A. WE NEXT COME TO THIS QUESTION FROM YOU: "ARE ARAB GOVERNMENTS PREPARED TO PERMIT THE PLO TO BLOCK RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS?" YOU THUS PRESENTED ME WITH ONE OF TWO VERSIONS OF THAT QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE SURFACED MANY, MANY TIMES DURING THE PAST THIRTY YEARS. THE ANSWER IS NOT PROFOUND THOUGH IT CARRIES LETHAL OVERTONES. IT IS: "YES, FOR AS LONG AS THEY FEEL THEY MUST". (THE SAFEST MODE OF LIFE FOR ARAB POLITICIANS IN THIS REGION CONSISTS OF OPPOSING ISRAEL.)

5.B. YOU NEED NOT FEEL "CRUDE" ABOUT ASKING THE MEANING AND THE UTILITY OF THE FAHD-ARAFAT RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITED STATES. IN UTILIZING FAHD OR ANY ARAB CHIEFTAIN WHO HAS DISPLAYED HELPFUL ATTITUDES TOWARD US, RULE ONE IS TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO WORK WITH. ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE DONE THAT WILL HIS UTILITY TO THE UNITED STATES BECOME CLEAR.

5.C. I SAID IN REFTTEL A, "WHEN TIME AND EVENTS MAKE IT DESIRABLE FOR US" TO REACH THE PLO LEADER, WE WOULD HAVE IN PRINCE FAHD AN EFFECTIVE AND DISCREET MEANS OF DOING SO. I BELIEVE HE WOULD ACT ONLY AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRESIDENT OR THE SECRETARY, AND ONLY AFTER A DISCUSSION OF THE SUPPORT HE COULD EXPECT FROM US.

6. I NOTED YOUR REACTION TO MY COMMENT ON THE NEED FOR CONTACT WITH ALL ELEMENTS OF DISPUTES WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO MEDIATE. YOU FEEL THAT WAS POSSIBLE IN VIET NAM AND KOREA BECAUSE WE
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WERE PARTIES TO THOSE CONFLICTS WHEREAS IN THE M.E. WE ARE NOT. WE WERE NOT PARTIES TO THE CONFLICTS IN RHODESIA OR CYPRUS, BUT WE DID TALK TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY. I DO HOPE THAT IS IS NOT, IN FACT, THE KISSINGER-ALLON TREATY OF

1975 WHICH IS THE TRUE OBSTACLE. I AM OF COURSE MOST SYMPATHETIC
TO AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED TO KEEP DOMESTIC PROBLEMS TO
A MINIMUM.

7. GOOD LUCK. PERHAPS WE'LL FIND A WAY TO MAKE THIS OMELETTE
WITHOUT BREAKING ANY EGGS.
PORTER

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